

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3456

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 10052

STADIS //////////////////////////////////////

EA FOR ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB FROM AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, EAID, TH

SUBJ: AID BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS AND POSITION OF USOM DIRECTOR

REF: A) BANGKOK 7591 B) STATE 62647, C) BANGKOK 3367 D) STATE
19989 E) BANGKOK 1032 F) 75 BANGKOK 22496

1. I AM CONCERNED TO LEARN (FYI IN A TELEPHONE CALL FROM USAID (USOM) MISSION DIRECTOR ROGER ERNST WHO IS ON CONSULTATIONS IN WASHINGTON) THAT AID/WASHINGTON, HAVING RAISED THE POSSIBILITY OF INTERGRATING USOM INTO THE EMBASSY (REF B) NOW OPPOSES TRYING TO RESOLVE THE PROTRACTED ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE BILATERAL AGREEMENT NEGOTIATIONS IN THIS WAY. THERE IS APPARENTLY SOME TALK ABOUT GOING BACK TO THE POSITION WE ONCE RECOMMENDED, WHICH WASHINGTON REJECTED SOME MONTHS AGO (REFS B AND D), OF HAVING A CONFIDENTIAL SIDE AGREEMENT WITH THE THAI ON DIPLOMATIC IMMUNITIES, WHICH THE THAI ADAMANTLY REFUSE TO HAVE STATED EXPLICITLY IN THE BILATERAL.

2. WE ARE CONVINCED THAT THE BEST WAY OUT OF OUR CURRENT IMPASSE WITH THE RTG IS TO FOLD A LEAN AID ELEMENT INTO THE EMBASSY. THE NATURE AND SIZE OF THE PROGRAM DOES NOT WARRANT A SEPARATE AID MISSION, AND THE TONE OF THE TIMES HERE DICTATES A SMALL AND AUSTERE STAFF, WITH A NAME SUCH AS ECONOMIC
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ASSISTANCE SECTION, WORKING OUT OF THE EMBASSY PROPER.

3. I WOULD MUCH APPRECIATE YOUR ASSISTANCE IN NUDGING THE BALL ON THROUGH THIS STICKY WICKET SO THAT WE CAN RESOLVE THE MATTER AS SOON AS POSSIBLE--BEFORE THE THAI POSITION HARDENS IN SOME UNHELPFUL WAY.

4. I UNDERSTAND ALSO THAT ROGER ERNST WILL BE LEAVING BANGKOK THIS SUMMER. THIS GIVES US AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO TRIM THE FRONT OFFICE STAFF OS USOM (TWO FSR-1'S) TO MAKE IT MORE IN LINE WITH THE SIZE OF THE PROGRAM AND THE CURRENT THAI POLITICAL SITUATION. I UNDERSTAND AID WASHINGTON MAY BE CONSIDERING REPLACING ERNST WITH ANOTHER R-1, THEREBY MAINTAINING THE PRESENT TOP-HEAVY STAFF. I WILL BE COMING IN WITH A SPEARATE MESSAGE RECOMMENDING THAT THE DIRECTOR AND DEPUTY POSITIONS BE MERGED, WITH THE PRESENT PROGRAM OFFICER BEING DOUBLE HATTED TO SERVE AS ACTING DIRECTOR WHEN ONE IS REQUIRED. I PROPOSE TO FILL THE NEW DIRECTOR POSITION WITH JIM WILLIAMS, THE PRESENT DEPUTY, WHO IS AN EXCELLENT OFFICER WITH UNUSUALLY PRODUCTIVE RELATIONS WITH THE RTG. WE SHOULD BE HEADING TOWARD A CONFIGURATION HERE IN WHICH A SNEIOR ECONOMIC OFFICER FROM EITHER STATE OR AID WOULD HANDLE ALL U.S. ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES.
WHITEHOUSE

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